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THE FUTURE ACTIVITY OF THIS SOCIETY

By THE SECRETARY

As was announced in the last number of the *Transactions*, the publications of this Society are to be issued *quarterly*, instead of annually as heretofore. Unfortunately the numbers have not been published regularly during the current year. This number, of extra size, concludes Vol. XXIX. Beginning with January, 1911, the issues will occur regularly four times per year.

This change at this time from the annual volume to a quarterly journal marks a new emphasis in our activities. Our prime work now becomes openly and frankly, as it should be, a work of publication. The quarterly form means more timely publication of scientific materials, and allows an adaptedness and flexibility denied to an annual volume. Our organization, our membership, and our meetings, from this time, come to be confessedly for the end of making this publication effective for our own use and for that of all lovers of micro-biology. To this the Secretary pledges his best efforts.

The fact that our society is named the "AMERICAN MICROSCOPICAL SOCIETY" need not give any uneasiness to anyone. It has a splendid record both of research and publication; its growing emphasis on the results of the microscope, rather than on the mere instrument itself, is both natural and creditable and exactly duplicates the history of similar societies in Europe. It can find its final function in the upbuilding of American science just as well with this name as with another, even though it may not be fully descriptive of its changing field.

As the Secretary sees the situation, we, as a society, are just now in need of some degree of conscious readjustment to the needs of our times. There appear to him two very distinct ways along which satisfactory adjustment and usefulness may be had:—(1) to enter upon some specialized field of microscopic research, now unprovided with adequate means of publication in this country, and to make this journal the best exponent of this especial interest; or (2) to enter confidently and with open mind into the fuller service of those lovers of micro-biology who, from necessity or choice, wish and need to have a general and synthetic view of the field, rather than a highly specialized and technical journal.

The first alternative, while presenting some remarkably attractive features, would involve a complete reversal of our traditional policy; and while this in itself is not prohibitive, it does demand that we shall see whether some other sound solution may not be in better harmony with the whole course of our evolution. Such a policy furthermore would produce an almost complete change in our membership. Probably less than 25 per cent of our members would be in need of so narrowly technical a journal as this policy would necessitate.

If, on the contrary, the present development of biological science in this country demands a journal which seeks to deal accurately and yet broadly with general micro-biology, this journal is in an excellent position to fill this need.

It is somewhat true that the specialized research student can not always resist the temptation to be a snob, and is liable to be intolerant of any publication which undertakes to deal with so large a field of interest as ours has been. And undoubtedly such treatment does have its pitfalls. The writer does not believe, however, that this lack of sympathy for the more general biology is sound, even for the investigator; and he is confident that the very best and sanest specialists in our society are *not* out of sympathy with this point of view, and will not be lost to the society. At any rate there are a great many students, and their number is increasing, who do feel the need of just this synthetic view of biology; *and their needs are quite worthy of attention on the part of scientific men.*

Indeed these more general students are needed to stand intermediate between the narrow expert and the unscientific public.

Their number and efficiency ought to be increased, for the good equally of the expert and of the public. We are all familiar with the miserable inefficiency of the passage of results from the research laboratory to the plain man. The larger and more catholic this intermediate group of scientists, the more hopeful will be the future of science, and the more quickly and accurately will the results of research become a part of the assets of the nation.

As a matter of fact the writer believes that the weakest place in our whole scheme of biological publications is just at this point of bringing together the results of advanced research, and of making them intelligible—quickly and accurately intelligible—to the non-professional or general student of biology. If this Society can contribute in some degree to this service, it will supply a real need, and worthily fulfill the prophecy of its past.

For these reasons the writer holds strongly and unhesitatingly to the view that there is a need for this journal; that this need lies most decidedly in the direction of continuing our evolution of the past years, rather than in changing to the narrower policy; and that our best services to the community may be rendered by undertaking really and intelligently to broaden our efforts rather than to narrow them. In this view many of those, who have done much for the Society in the past, heartily concur.

It may be allowable to say in this connection, that there is no purpose to use the *Transactions* to exploit a weak, dilute, and superficially popular type of biology. The research articles will be just as exact and as numerous as in the past; but there will be an effort to make, in addition to these, such a series of summaries and digests as will give the members of the Society, who may not see large numbers of biological journals, a fair idea of the activities in the whole field.

Taking our present published membership, only about 25 per cent have been producers of papers for the *Transactions*; and this number includes many who have contributed only brief notes. These contributors are almost equally divided among physicians, teachers, and the independent and isolated students. Thus some three-fourths of our membership maintain their connection with the Society for the sake of the publications, or thru a desire to encourage biology. As nearly as I can make out, about ten per cent of the membership is connected with the larger Universities

where they have access to numerous technical publications; eighteen per cent are physicians in large cities, where presumably they have similar advantages; twenty per cent are unclassified members who live near large libraries. The remaining fifty per cent are physicians, teachers of biology in colleges and high schools (about fifteen per cent of the whole membership), and isolated amateurs; few of these have the use of many journals. It is fair to assume that such a publication as the *Transactions* have been, broadened as indicated above, will continue to appeal strongly and to be highly serviceable to this latter half of our membership. This suggests that we should seek greater growth among these classes of students, as well as among our more favored specialists.

An examination of the articles of the last ten years shows that of the major papers, ten per cent deal primarily with medical subjects; thirty per cent are papers on subjects closely related to the work of the physician, as parasitology, bacteriology, impurities of the water supply, and the like; twenty per cent are concerned with the microscope as an instrument, and its related helps and their technic; forty per cent deal with fairly technical phases of micro—or general—biology, either structural or systematic, appealing to the better class of research students—amateur and professional—and to the general teacher of biology. Thirty per cent of the whole body of articles may fairly be classed as general articles which would be reasonably interesting to any intelligent person, tho not a specialist in anything.

This analysis shows that our publication, if continued in the spirit of the past, may be expected to appeal quite largely to teachers of general biology in colleges and high schools; to physicians who are still interested in the biology foundational to medicine and in the general questions of the science; to investigators, amateur and professional, in any of the various fields of micro-biology to which we have given attention; to an increasing class of people who are desirous of showing their general interest and sympathy with the progress of biology, even tho they may not themselves have the time or disposition to work as experts in this field.

It is therefore among these four classes of people that our work should be done in enlarging our membership, and our *Transactions* should be edited with the real needs of these groups in mind. *The editor, therefore, has this proposition to make to the member-*

ship:—Without weakening the appeal of the TRANSACTIONS to the research student, he will undertake to increase its value to the general student and teacher, the scientific physician, and the intelligent layman who wishes to keep in touch with the progress being made in biology. This can readily be done, and can be done only on condition that the present members of the Society will assist in the task of bringing the claims of the quarterly to the notice of those who ought to be interested—namely, the most up-to-date physicians of your community, the teacher and advanced students of biology in the high school or college or university, the isolated person who works with the microscope for mere love of it, the public or medical library, and the well-to-do public spirited people who would be willing to contribute the small amount of our annual dues to aid in advancing scientific work.

As one of the steps in redeeming his part of this agreement, the editor proposes to introduce in each issue a brief review or summary of the most important items of recent progress in one or more of the various subdivisions of biology. In this way we can have a *resume* of the most important fields every two or three years. These reviews will not be mere minute abstracts of all the special papers that appear, such as a bibliographer would wish—altho specific references will be given to the most important papers; they will rather be *digests* of the most important results, with appropriate discussion of the conclusions reached and of the tendencies manifest in the special fields. For this work it is purposed to enlist some of the best biologists of America, both within and without the Society.

Among the reviews planned at present are those of the following departments of interest:—parasitology; bacteriology; plant and animal experimentation; behavior of microscopic animals; researches in the microscopic aspects of heredity; biological technic; cell studies; plankton, and water purification; comparative physiology of the cell and of cell-products; other phases of medical biology; pedagogy of biology. Still other topics may be added as need arises.

Some of these topics are only indirectly related to microscopy, to be sure; but there is none of them to which the microscope has not largely contributed. And it is not unfitting that a society originally organized to exploit the microscope should father an effort to have a family reunion of the legitimate descendants of the mic-

roscope, and to synthesize the special interests.

In conclusion, the incoming secretary feels that he has a right to invite and expect the full cooperation of every real friend of the Society. This cooperation should take two forms:—the presenting of some of your *very best*, suitable papers to the secretary for use in the Quarterly; and (2) the seeking for memberships among your friends who may in any way be interested in the work we are doing.

T. W. GALLOWAY.